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Multi-stakeholder dialogue segment

Multi-stakeholder dialogue segment

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum**

Dialogue paper by trade unions***

Framework for action: trade union priorities for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Framework for action: general aims

1. Trade unions propose a framework for action based on the central themes of Agenda 21,[1] as developed since Rio. Our proposals for the World Summit on Sustainable Development presuppose an expanded role for trade unions and other major groups, in partnership with each other, Governments and international agencies. We believe that the Summit will achieve its goals if it is able to mobilize all stakeholders within a framework for action based on the following general aims:

(a) Implementation of principles 1, 3, 5, 8, 20, 21 and 25 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[2] which establishes human beings at the centre of sustainable development;

(b) Full integration of the three "dimensions" of sustainable development, in all development decisions, particularly the social dimension, as it is a prerequisite to gaining the widespread consensus necessary to support required changes;

(c) A focus on employment and dignified work as a means of promoting equality and eradicating poverty;

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*** Prepared by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Trade Secretariats (ITS). The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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(d) Full recognition of the rights of all stakeholders to participate in decision-making, including workers and trade unions, as outlined in chapter 29 of Agenda 21.

Framework for action: partnerships for action

2. Based on experience since Rio, we propose that the World Summit on Sustainable Development promote a variety of partnerships and capacity-building initiatives that involve workers and trade unions in:

(a) Employment and equity alliances to resolve poverty, equity and access issues raised by all major groups, and requiring the cooperation of business and private institutions, local authorities and Governments to achieve full integration in economic and environmental policy. Extensive changes required in current patterns call for a better understanding of social and employment impacts, and the subsequent development of effective and just transition measures;

(b) Work-based partnerships for sustainable development based on collective agreements as best practice models for action on sustainable development issues relating to work and production. These may take the form of "voluntary agreements", of which thousands already exist, including worldwide "framework agreements" in some of the largest multinational corporations, as well as joint projects, institutions and processes for consultation and cooperation to:

- Improve and clean up production, as a means of promoting worker and public-health as well as environmental protection;
- Meet agreed government targets for sustainable development;
- Establish verification tools for voluntary agreements and government regulation;
- Develop and conduct sustainability impact assessments;
- Develop effective links between production and consumption, through verifiable eco-labels and other workplace-based instruments;

(c) Capacity-building partnerships for effective change to predict impacts, interpret implications, and devise transition plans in an integrated way, to include:

- Research, analysis, and tool development partnerships to better understand and respond to social and employment implications of change. Trade unions want to work with scientific, technological and academic groups, as well as among intergovernmental bodies and community-based research groups on work-based partnerships that incorporate data-gathering, information feedback systems, piloting and development with technical expertise to produce social indicators, impact assessments and tools that can be used in the implementation of programmes;
- Training and education partnerships to build the capacity of workers, employers and trade unions for environmental and economic planning for transition to sustainable development. With our network of 165 million members on over 2 million work sites and our tradition of joint workplace education and action, trade unions have much to offer in this area. We seek partnerships with education institutions, government, and intergovernmental agencies to promote training and education, in the context of joint workplace information and feedback systems;

(d) Public policy and action partnerships to effectively expand multi-stakeholder activity at all levels. This is needed to achieve agreement and support of entire communities for policies and financial measures designed to promote the level of change that is required. This requires:

- An active role for government to provide regulatory systems, including inspections and enforcement, as well as to ensure equitable provision of such essential services as water, sanitation, and infrastructure. Local authorities, in particular, must be given the necessary resources to promote participatory activity in the workplace and the community;
- Incorporation of sustainable development goals into trade, investment and governance decisions, with priority given to the social impacts of policies, practices and agreements governing trade, investment, financial decision-making and corporate accountability;

(e) Rights partnerships to give full effect to the rights-based approach of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and to ensure attention

to such issues as: the precautionary principle, corporate accountability, freedom to information, and full participation in environmental decision-making of all affected groups, including workers in workplaces. This requires an expanded role for agencies and instruments of global governance, for example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) *Guidelines for Multinational Corporations*,[3] and the Global Compact; such international achievements as the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, the Global Reporting Initiative, and the World Summit for Social Development itself; multi-stakeholder dialogue and action; and reliance on tripartite structures such as those within ILO.

Framework for action: specific action proposals

3. This framework for action can be readily translated into specific proposals for action, based on the unique capacity, structure and objectives of each major group, cooperating with other groups, Governments and international agencies. In this spirit of partnership, trade unions will commit themselves to:

- Undertake initiatives with OECD, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), ILO, the European Union (EU) etc. to research social and employment impacts of change (for example, climate change measures), as well as for increased financial/technical assistance to allow developing countries to fashion their own solutions;
- Seek new ways to adapt successful workplace structures and processes to broader social problems and applications, for example, joint work-site committees and assessment models;
- Increase participation by trade unions in all regions and at all levels, in the sustainable development process, including multi-stakeholder processes, and partnerships for change;
- Undertake education to increase awareness and use of such instruments as the ILO conventions, and the OECD *Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*;
- Undertake initiatives to promote consensus on the need for public ownership and control of such vital human services as water, sanitation, health and welfare;
- Launch new initiatives to link occupational health and safety to public health, as a means to significantly reduce deaths, injury and disease;
- Launch a "universal sustainable development label" to signify products or services produced in sustainable workplaces and consistent with sustainable development to promote closer links between workplace principles of action and consumer behaviour;
- Promote round-table meetings on a sectoral basis, devoted to the building of partnerships and agreements among major groups, Governments and international agencies;
- Expand on existing framework agreements to promote voluntary agreements on a sectoral, a regional and an international basis;
- Take steps to increase trade union participation in Local Agenda 21 groups to fully utilize the unique capacity of local authorities and encourage closer cooperation among the workplace, the community and domestic life;
- Launch programmes to utilize workers and trade unions as "watchdogs" and public educators in the workplace and community on sustainable development issues;
- Take steps to expand international cooperation between unions to share capacity wherever it is needed to promote sustainable development.

4. In addition to pursuing the above, trade unions[4] are committed to supporting proposals and action plans put forward by other major groups, Governments and international agencies.

Notes

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[2] Ibid., annex I.

[3] Text available at http://www.oecd.org/daf/investment/guidelines/

[4] Trade unions are represented by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to OECD and the International Trade Secretariats (ITS). For more information, see the trade union position paper entitled *Fashioning a New Deal* on the ICFTU web site at http://www.icftu.org or contact Lucien Royer at +331.5537.3737.